

## **Green Inspectors**

### **Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council**

#### **Background And Context**

In 1999 Bolton Metropolitan Council decided to develop a process for reality checks to evaluate and improve its services. It was agreed to use volunteers from their customers to get their point of view and they began recruitment throughout 2001/2002.

The first customer inspector reality check was completed in August 2002. It confirms actual standard, enables customer involvement and gives the service provider an understanding of the customer's views.

The Green Inspectors are a progression from the Customer Inspectors. A consultation exercise completed late 2004/2005 showed a need and demand for customers to be involved in the monitoring process relating to Environmental Services.

In 2004 Bolton at Home and Environmental Services (previously Commercial Services) developed a Service Level Agreement. The aim of this was to clarify the roles and responsibilities of Environmental Services and Bolton at Home.

As all Bolton at Home customers are in some way in receipt of Environmental Services, the Green Inspectors are a good monitor of the standards being reached. Bolton is therefore able to achieve a survey that is representative of the borough.

#### **Current Position**

There are currently 28 Green Inspectors. Each has chosen a number of streets in their local area which they inspect once a month. A separate checklist is used for each area. They then forward the paperwork to Bolton at Home and the results are inputted onto a database.

The database is similar to that which is used for the Local Environmental Quality (LEQ) checks that Environmental Services complete every four months.

These figures are comparable with the overall national returns delivered to the Government every year. Therefore the results from the Green Inspectors can be compared to a national standard. This helps assess the success of our current cleansing regimes.

The first checks were completed in October 2005. Each quarter the results are collated and the four standards marked against are reduced to two. 'Excellent' and 'Good' became 'Pass' and 'Average' and 'Poor' became 'Fail'. The two main areas of analysis were 'Category' and 'Neighbourhood'. These results are fed back to Environmental Services and the Green Inspectors. They also receive a paper copy of the results every three months.

The pass rate for the first year was 71%. This had increased to 74% for the second year.

### **Future**

The Green Inspectors have just commenced a third year. The Service Level Agreement between Environmental Services and Bolton At Home has recently been reviewed. Comments made by the Green Inspectors were considered in reviewing each of the categories and they are now included as a recognised method of performance monitoring.

### **Recruitment**

Recruitment of Green Inspectors is ongoing as we are determined to gain a more accurate picture of the environmental standards throughout the whole borough. The only requirement for becoming a Green Inspector is that they live on a Bolton at Home estate.

There is no set method for recruitment. One of the most common methods is asking customers who complain about environmental issues to volunteer. Other methods include recruitment via neighbourhood panels and open days. The current inspectors also play a vital role in inviting their friends, colleagues and neighbours to volunteer. Training for the Green Inspectors is jointly organised and delivered by Bolton at Home and Environmental Services.

These are the questions we ask potential recruits:

- Are you interested in becoming a Green Inspector?
- Do you feel the area you live in does not meet the Environmental Standards?
- Are you concerned about the appearance of your local area?
- Are you interested in becoming involved in the services which affect your local community?
- Do you have a spare morning or afternoon once a month?
- Are you interested in becoming part of a group of volunteers who meet every three months to discuss the issues in their areas and receive feedback on their concerns?

**For further information, please contact:**

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